



CPAC Newsletter

April 2004

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Army Benefits Center (ABC-C)

Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C)
Telephone Menu

1-877-276-9287 or 1-877-276-9833 (TDD)

Welcome to the Army Benefits Center. Please listen carefully as our menu options have changed. If you are a Department of the Army civilian employee, please press 1 now. If you are an Army uniformed service member seeking answers to questions about the Thrift Savings Plan, press 2 now. Thank you!

Welcome to the ABC-C, Army Benefits Center-Civilian! For fast and easy transactions, visit our web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil>. For information on our Customer Service Survey, press 1. To access the Benefits and Entitlements Services System, press 2.

For current Army serviced employees,

press 1. If you are a retired Army serviced employee or if you are the survivor of an employee, who retired from Army civilian service, press 2. If you are seeking temporary continuation of coverage under the FEHB, press 3.

You will use your Social Security Number and PIN (2-digit month and 2-digit year of your birth) to access your records. When you make a benefits and entitlements transaction through the automated system, your PIN, in connection with your Social Security Number, will have the same effect as your signature. To enter your Social Security Number and PIN, press 1. If you have forgotten your PIN, press 2. Please enter your Social Security Number. Please enter your six-digit PIN. (Please hold while we verify this information). To change your PIN,

press 1; to continue, press 2. The current duty phone number on file for you is _____. If this is correct, press 1, otherwise press 2.

*At this point, you will need to select whichever module you desire access to at this time.

For Federal Employees' Health Benefits, press 1: (To conduct FEHB business transactions, you will need the enrollment code of the health plan of your choice, each family member's Social Security Number and date of birth, and the name of the group health insurance and policy holder if you or an eligible family member have other group health insurance.)

For general FEHB information, press 1. For personal FEHB information, press 2. To elect New Employee coverage, press 3. To change from Self and Family to Self-Only without changing your

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health plan, press 4. To make an Open Season change or election, press 5. To cancel your FEHB change or election, press 6. To make a Non-Open Season change or election, press 7. To obtain a FAXed copy of your most recent SF 2809, press 8. To transfer to a Benefits Counselor, press 0. To return to the previous menu, press 9.

For Retirement, press 2: (The annuity estimates are for planning purposes only and do not represent the final computation which OPM will give you.)

For general retirement information, press 1. For personal retirement information, press 2. (You may obtain the date you are first eligible to retire for a voluntary retirement in the personal information area.)

For retirement estimate, press 3.

For a pre-calculated voluntary retirement estimate, press 1. For a real time/on line estimate, press 2. For a TSP monthly annuity estimate, press 3. To transfer to a Benefits Counselor, press 0. To return to the previous menu, press 9.

For Thrift Savings Plan, press 3: For personal program information, press 1. For current contributions, press 1. For projected contributions, press 2. For information regarding how to inquire on your current TSP balance, press 3. To transfer to a Benefits Counselor, press 0. To return to the previous menu, press 9.

To enroll or change your TSP during Open Season, press 2. To make a New Employee election, press 3. To stop your contributions to the TSP, press 4. To transfer to a Benefits Counselor, press

0. To return to the previous menu, press 9.

For Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance, press 4: For general Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance information, press 1. For personal life insurance information, press 2. To elect New Employee coverage, press 3. To make a Non-Open Season election, change or termination, press 4. To make an Open Season election or change, press 5. To transfer to a Benefits Counselor, press 0. To return to the previous menu, press 9.

For Benefits News, press 5:

To request a Faxed Document, press 6: To request a document, press 1. To order an index of available documents, press 2. To return to the previous menu, press 9. To Exit the system, press 9.

DFAS to Process Retroactive Civilian Pay Increase



The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) stands ready to begin processing the 2.1 percent retroactive pay increase for the federal civilian employees it serves.

President George W. Bush signed an Executive Order on March 3, 2004 identifying the new pay

increase percentages. The timing for DFAS processing of these actions is contingent upon receipt of corrected personnel actions from the responsible personnel offices. The corrected actions will be processed into the DFAS pay system as soon as they are received.

Due to the number of General Schedule employees involved, DFAS will process the retroactive portion of the increase for prior paydays over the course of at least two pay periods. The increase is retroactive to Jan. 11, 2004 for General Schedule employees.

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To maintain quality control in processing the hundreds of thousands of pay actions related to this retroactive increase, agencies and major commands will be designated to a specific pay period for processing. Due to the relatively small

size of some activity types, their processing will be completed during the first pay period. The large sizes of some agencies and major commands dictates their pay actions be processed over the course of two pay periods. DFAS will publish a timetable for the payroll

changes once processing is initiated. For Federal Wage System employees, DFAS anticipates effecting all of the retroactive increase during the pay period in which the personnel action is received and processed by the pay system.

Centralized Civilian Recruitment Program—FAQ

How do I prepare a Resume?

Use Army's Resume Builder with the following in mind: This tool allows you to create a resume with all of the required information and to electronically save it to Army's database. By electronically submitting your resume and/or self-nomination(s) for a vacancy, you will receive an electronic acknowledgement of receipt. This tool can be accessed from the employment tab on www.cpol.army.mil or from hyper-links in vacancy announcements. Your resume is not intended to be a complete "working life history" but should provide enough information to determine eligibility and qualifications. When preparing your resume, start by thinking about your career goals. Focus on defining and identifying the key and meaningful skills you currently

possess. Describe your experience in sufficient detail with concrete words rather than vague descriptions. Do not use acronyms. A well-written resume can be used to compete for many DA vacancies.

While Army accepts resumes by e-mail or regular mail, you are strongly encouraged to use Army's Resume Builder. If you choose to submit an application by email or regular mail, you are encouraged to use the format used by Army's Resume Builder. If you choose to prepare and submit a traditional resume (not recommended), you will need to follow the instructions in the Army Resume Preparation Kit at www.cpol.army.mil.

You are reminded that all information included in your resume is subject to review and verification. Legal and regulatory penalties may be imposed

on those submitting false information.

How do I submit a Resume?

It is recommended that you submit a resume at the beginning of your job search. Once a resume is on file, you can easily nominate yourself for Army vacancies by clicking on a self-nomination button from the job announcement (see below). The Army Resume Builder or the job announcement will have guidance on where to submit this resume. You may update your resume at anytime, however, it is important to remember that only the latest resume will be active.

How do I Self-Nominate (Apply)?

You must complete two steps to apply under a vacancy announcement - submit a resume and self-nominate. Once you have saved and submitted your

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resume you are ready to apply for specific vacancy announcements. As you see vacancies for which you want to be considered, you must apply by self-nominating. The preferred method is to go to www.cpol.army.mil and open the announcement. You will find a button, labeled "Self-Nom", that allows you to electronically apply for the vacancy. Although not recommended, you may also self nominate through email, surface mail or fax. Instructions for this process are in the announcement.

How do I monitor the status of my Job Search?

You have easy access to real-time information on the status of your application via the Internet by using a tool appropriately called ANSWER. ANSWER is accessed at www.cpol.army.mil under the employment tab. By following the instructions at the ANSWER web site, you create a user id and password that will give you access to the status of your resume and self-nomination(s). You can also view the resume that you currently have on file. By using Army's Resume Builder to submit resumes and electronically submit self-nominations, you will avoid waiting until

applications are manually processed to find out your status.

Resumes from applicants not permanently employed by the Department of Army will be retained in the database for six (6) months from date of last submission of resume, date last accessed, or until selected for a position. Resumes from current permanent Department of Army civilian employees will be retained in the database until the employee either updates the resume or is selected for a position through competitive referral.

Placement of Senior Service College Graduates



You may be hearing talk of a program to place graduates of Senior Service College (which includes the Army War College, Naval War College, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University etc.) into vacant senior level civilian positions. The following information is provided to familiarize you with the placement program, as we may see some of these graduates placed into senior level positions in the activities serviced by the Fort Detrick Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

The Senior Service College (SSC) graduate placement program facilitates the placement of SSC graduates into vacant positions (generally at the GS-14 and GS-15 equivalent grade levels) that require SSC level education. The Civilian Human Resources Agency will be reviewing unobligated recruitment actions in the Army, that are in the same occupational series and grade level equivalents as candidates who will graduate from the SSC. Position descriptions associated with the recruitment actions will be

compared with the resumes of the SSC graduates and the stated preferences of each graduate. When an appropriate match is obtained, the Civilian Human Resources Agency will contact the CPOC to inform them to "hold" the recruit action on the position, for potential fill by the SSC graduate. Functional Chief Representatives (FCR) will work with the MACOMs to determine the best placement for the SSC graduate. Decisions on placements will be between the FCR, the

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MACOM, and the preference of the SSC graduate. The SSC graduate placements take precedence over the DOD Priority Placement

Program (PPP). When a placement is made, any remaining actions matched to that SSC graduate will be released back to the CPOC for fill through traditional

channels.

Additional information can be found at the following weblink: <http://www.cpol.army.mil/library/train/tld-060503.html>

Tax Changes

The following are tax changes that were effective 3/4/04, with the DCPS Payroll Office Advisory Release 03-4L. All changes are effective with this release unless otherwise noted. Employees, living in the states/counties noted below, may notice the tax increase/decrease on their LES for PPE 3/6/04.

Pennsylvania(PA):
Effective 1/1/04
Increases the withholding tax rate from 2.8% to 3.07%.

Reading(city),(PA)(taxing authority 422177, tax type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the resident total tax rate from 1% to 1.5%.

Lancaster(city)(PA)(taxing authority 421345, tax type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the resident total tax rate from 1% to 1.1%.
Changes the effective rate of .6% when used with Lancaster SD (taxing authority 421348, tax type 01) in Lancaster County.

Tobyhanna(TS),PA(taxing authority 422633, tax type 01): Eff immediately
Adds a 1% non-resident tax rate.

S Annville TS, (PA), taxing authority 420051, tax type 01): Added to payroll system
A total tax of 1.4% resident rate and a non-resident rate of 1%.

MARYLAND(MD):
Effective 1/1/04
Decreases the tax rate for the \$3,000 and over bracket table from 4.8% to 4.75%.
Increases the exemption amount from \$2,100 to \$2,400.
Increases the Maryland resident employed in Delaware tax and increases the exemption amount. DCPS does not accommodate this withholding.
Removes the wage bracket tables and now taxes are calculated using a flat rate of 4.75%.

Allegany(county),MD (taxing authority 240005, tax variance value 01,type

01): Eff 1/1/04
Decrease the tax rate from 2.96% to 2.95%.

Calvert(county),MD(taxing authority 240001,tax variance value 01, type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increase the tax rate from 2.6% to 2.85%.

Carroll(county),MD(taxing authority 240009,tax variance value 09, type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increase the tax rate from 2.85% to 3.1%.

Charles(county),MD (taxing authority 240011, tax variance value 11, type 01):Eff 1/1/04
Decreases the tax rate from 2.96% to 2.95%.

Frederick(county),MD, (taxing authority 240013, tax variance value 13, type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the tax rate from 2.96% to 3%.

Howard(county),MD, (taxing authority 240016, tax variance value 16,type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the tax rate

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“Employees living in the states/counties noted may notice the tax increase/decrease on their LES for PPE 3/6/04.”

from 2.45% to 3.2%.

Montgomery(county),MD,
(taxing authority 240018,
tax variance value 18,
type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the tax rate
from 2.96% to 3.2%.

Prince George's(county),

MD,(taxing authority
240019,tax variance value
19,type 01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the tax rate
from 3.1% to 3.2%.

Somerset(county),MD,
(taxing authority 240021,
tax variance value 21,type
01): Eff 1/1/04

Increases the tax rate
from 3.15% to 3.2%.

Talbot(county),MD,(taxing
authority 240003, tax
variance value 03, type
01): Eff 1/1/04
Increases the tax rate
from 1.79% to 2.25%.

What is 'OASDI'?

OASDI stands for Old Age
Survivors Disability
Insurance. Another name
for this is Social Security.

The deduction amount to
be withheld, for OASDI, is
6.2% for FERS and FICA
employees. Employees,

covered under the CSRS
retirement system, DO
NOT have this deduction.

How Military Service Can Affect Civilian Retirement



Have you served in the
military? Did you know that
you might be able to have
that time count toward
your retirement from the
civilian workforce? The
process of determining the
amount of money you
would have to pay to have
this active duty time count
is called Post-56 Military
Deposit because it refers
to military service
performed after 1956.

If the characterization of
your military service is
honorable and you are
currently covered by either
the CSRS or FERS
retirement systems, you
may be eligible to make a
deposit for the time you
served in the military and
have that time credited
toward your retirement.

This is an important
decision in your career
and it is important that you
make this decision with
the best information
possible.

The process to determine
if it is beneficial for you to
pay for this time to be
creditable begins with you.

- Review the
information on the
ABC-C website to
determine if you are
eligible to pay for
this time to be
creditable. This can
be found by going to
the ABC-C Home
Page at [https://
www.abc.army.mil](https://www.abc.army.mil).
Select Information,
then Retirement,
then Information.
Select either Post-

56 Military Deposit-
CSRS or Post-56
Military Deposit-
FERS depending on
your current
retirement
coverage.

- If you are eligible,
complete the form
RI 20-97 and mail it
to the military
finance center
identified on the
ABC-C website.
Prior to mailing the
form you will need
to attach a copy of
your DD Form(s)
214. This form will
be returned to you
with your estimated
earnings while in
the military.
- Upon return of the

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- RI 20-97, complete either the SF2803 or SF3108 (depending on your retirement coverage) and forward the forms along with your DD Form(s) 214 to the ABC-C at the address indicated on the website.
- Once the request is received in the ABC-C, a counselor will determine the amount of money required for you to pay for this time to count toward your civilian retirement. The ABC-C will complete an OPM Form 1514 and forward it to DFAS for completion.
 - Once DFAS has completed the form, you will receive a response from DFAS indicating the amount of money you are required to pay to have this time count toward your civilian retirement. There will be payment options on the letter as well.
 - Payment of the money to have your military time count is voluntary. Once you receive your response from DFAS, you simply decide whether or not to pay the required amount to get credit for that active duty time to count toward your retirement from the civilian work force.

National Security Personnel System (NSPS)

The following website: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/index.html>, provides information on the National Security Personnel System (NSPS), which was authorized under the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2004 (signed by the President on November

24, 2003). The NSPS legislation allows the Department of Defense to build a new personnel management system for its civilian workforce to address the unique role of civilians in DoD. NSPS will change how civilians are hired, assigned, rewarded, advanced, and removed, as well as how appeals

are handled - all within the context of merit system principles, accommodation of veterans' preference, and respect for bargaining. The system will be established in collaboration with employee representatives and in coordination with the Office of Personnel Management.



Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

This is a reminder that eligible expenses you incurred during 2003 must be postmarked or faxed by May 2, 2004 in order to be reimbursed. For a list of eligible expenses, visit the FSA website at <http://>

www.fsafeds.com. To access your claim payment and account balance information at any time, select "My Account" from the menu on the website. If you experience difficulty accessing your

account online, contact a Benefits Counselor at 1-877-FSAFEDS (372-3337) Monday thru Friday from 9am to 9 pm EST or via e-mail at FSAFEDS@shps.net.

Changes to TSP Loan Program

“Changes to the Loan Program will reinforce the importance of borrowing from your TSP account only as a last resort.”

Effective July 1, 2004, the TSP will make three changes to the Loan Program:

- A \$50 fee will be deducted from the amount of each new loan.
- You will no longer be able to have two general purpose loans at the same time. Instead you will only be allowed one general purpose loan and one residential loan.
- When you pay off one loan, you will not be

eligible to apply for another loan for 60 days.

TSP is making these changes because in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of loans. Some participants constantly have two outstanding loans, taking another loan immediately after one is paid in full. This practice results in administrative expenses that are currently charged to all TSP participants, whether or not they ever use the Loan Program.

These changes to the Loan Program will reinforce the importance of borrowing from your TSP account only as a last resort. For participants who need a TSP loan, the \$50 fee will cover the cost of processing and servicing the loan and will ensure that these costs are paid by the 500,000 participants who use the program and not by the other 2.7 million participants who do not use the program.

Performance and Performance Management



Performance Management guidance can sometimes be confusing and misunderstood. Basically the guidance provides policies and procedures for the management of employee performance (i.e., planning, developing, monitoring, rating, and rewarding employee contributions). Managing performance should be a systematic process by which an agency involves its employees, as individuals or members of a group, in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency mission and goals.

This is the first in a series of Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) Articles which will discuss this often misunderstood guidance of planning, developing, monitoring, rating, and rewarding employee performance. This article will discuss planning performance.

The revisions made in 1995 to the Government-wide performance appraisal and awards regulations support sound management principles. Great care was taken to ensure that the requirements those regulations establish would complement and

not conflict with the kinds of activities and actions practiced in effective organizations.

In an effective organization, work is planned out in advance. Planning means setting performance expectations and goals for groups and individuals to channel their efforts toward achieving organizational objectives. Getting employees involved in the planning process will help them understand the goals of the organization, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how well it should be

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done.

The regulatory requirements for planning employees' performance include establishing the elements and standards of their performance appraisal plans.

Performance elements and standards should be measurable, understandable, verifiable, equitable, and achievable. Through critical elements, employees are held accountable as individuals for work assignments or responsibilities. Employee performance plans should be flexible so that they can be adjusted for changing

program objectives and work requirements. When used effectively, these plans can be beneficial working documents that are discussed often, and not merely paperwork that is filed in a drawer and seen only when ratings of record are required.

It is important to remember that planning for performance is most effective when the agency and its employees are involved in the process.

Our next article will discuss requirements for developing standards and employees for performance. Developing"

means increasing the capacity to perform through training, giving assignments that introduce new skills or higher level of responsibility, improving work processes, or other methods. to monitor performance.

Specific questions, comments and/or concerns regarding planning work and setting expectations for performance should be forwarded to the Labor Management Employee Relations Specialists, Mr Doug Roberts or Mrs. Regina Miller at 301-619-2247.

Where to Find your Official Training History

We often get copies of training completion certificates or DD Form 1556's asking that they be filed in the employee's personnel folder.

Contrary to popular belief, your training history is not located in the OPF, not ATRRS, not your Acquisition Career Record Brief, CEFMS, SAP, or other training management system. It is kept electronically in the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) that is maintained by your Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC).

In 1996, personnel offices were directed to discontinue filing training completions in employee personnel folders. Army's policy was to retain the existing training records in the OPF until the employee leaves Army. At that time some Civilian Personnel Offices entered the completed training into the automated database, others did not. That means the database may or may not contain those records. Since that time, completed training has been entered in DCPDS if it was reported and it met certain criteria for posting.

Many Commands, installations and the military use other systems to track training activities as well. These systems do not "talk" to DCPDS, so reporting completed training to update other systems does not result in updating your official training record. For example, completion of MySmartForce courses is reported in an ATRRS record established for you, but it does not flow to DCPDS to be recorded with training obtained from other sources. You still need to report this training to the CPOC

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"Contrary to popular belief, your training history is kept electronically in the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) that is maintained by your CPOC."

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through your training coordinator. Since these documents are not filed or returned, you should keep your original documents and send copies.

Your recorded training

history can be viewed and printed out locally. Find a person in your management chain or administrative office that can request personnel actions using the DCPDS system. They should be able to show you. Or

you can ask your CPAC representative. The information will be found in "ART" under Employee Data.

Later articles will deal with what is recorded and how to submit records.



Non-Appropriated Fund Vacancies

Recreation Aid - Bowling
Alley - \$6.50 Flex

Recreation Aid -
Community Activities
Center - \$6.50 Flex

Child & Youth Program
Assistant - Flex \$9.65

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center

**810 Schreider Street, Suite 106
Fort Detrick, MD 21702**

**Phone: 301-619-2247
Fax: 301-619-2465**
